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The investigator describes the writing problems of remedial English students in four community colleges and concludes: (1) remedial English teachers disagree on the value of certain writing factors; (2) prefer global ratings of initial compositions; (3) disagree on criteria for evaluating compositions, placement procedures, course objectives, instructional practices, and attitudes toward students; and (4) that objective tests used had high content validity. Recommendations include (1) definition of terms and identification of goals (i.e., developmental, corrective, and remedial teaching), (2) the use of several tests for placement, (3) emphasis on diagnostic procedures, (4) attention to developing constructive teacher attitudes, (5) the value of student conferences, (6) district conferences on composition, and (7) the need for Research and Instructional Service Centers. (JC)

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CITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT

FOR SPECIAL PROGRAMS / Angelo Dispenzieri, Ph.D., Director

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE WRITING PROBLEMS OF REMEDIAL ENGLISH STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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FOR SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

APR 14 1969

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INFORMATION

"Education must make good on the concept that no child within our society is either unteachable or unreachable--that whenever a child appears at the doors of our schools, he presents a direct challenge to us and to all our abilities . . ."

---Francis Keppel, former
U.S. Commissioner of Education

For all the students who suffer on the remedial treadmill

and for all the educators who strive to bring about reform.

FOREWORD

The Community College has become associated with an "open door" admissions policy. Lurking behind this door is a sinister figure with a blunt instrument called "English Placement Test." In his previous study of California Community Colleges, Dr. Bossone showed that 70 percent of entering students failed this test and were placed in Remedial English. Of these students only 30 percent eventually entered the first credit course in English. For many students this "open door" carries the same message as the one celebrated by Dante: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

This pattern has not yet become established in the New York City Community Colleges, and Dr. Bossone is deeply concerned to prevent it. How it can be avoided when the Community Colleges reach their intended clientele is a massive unsolved problem that the present study can do no more than delineate. It must be recognized that the teachers of Remedial English, for all their faults, have not created this problem. If their standards became more realistic, their attitudes toward students more sympathetic, and their remedial procedures more effective, it would still be true that college teachers in other fields will not give passing grades to examinations that are as badly written as a majority of these students write. Furthermore, although the lower schools are blamed for the existence of this problem, their best efforts are inadequate to cope with it. People who have lived without much hope for three hundred years are not likely to speak or write the King's English. The present study hopes only to call attention to some of their linguistic problems. It will take the concerted efforts of researchers and English teachers to alleviate them.

January, 1969

PAUL B. DIEDERICH
Senior Research Associate
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An investigation of this type requires the support and cooperation of many individuals other than the investigator; as a result, there are many people, too numerous to mention here, to whom I am grateful for support during many trying moments. I do, however, owe special thanks to the following for offering more assistance than anyone has a right to expect:

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To Dr. Doris Gourevitch, Dr. Cortland Auser, Dr. Charlotte Croman, Dr. Arthur Minerof and Mrs. Pearl Gasarch who gave invaluable aid in collecting the data.

To Mr. Stanley Bernknopf, who assisted in tabulating the data.

And above all, to Dr. Angelo Dispenzieri, Director of The City University Research and Evaluation Unit, who offered me counsel, professional assistance, and heart when I needed it most.

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THE WRITING PROBLEMS OF REMEDIAL ENGLISH STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

PART I

INTRODUCTION

This study grew out of two other studies which I completed while serving on the staff at the University of California, Riverside; the first study entitled The Training and Work of California Public Junior College Teachers of English[1] made clear that the present background and training of junior college English teachers, especially in the area of remedial English, were inadequate and that the great diversity of practices and policies in teaching create confusion and impede progress; and a second study entitled Remedial English Instruction in California Public Junior Colleges: An Analysis and Evaluation of Current Practices[2] made clear that remedial English classes are not very effective and are in need of reappraisal by all who are concerned with the improving of the teaching of English in the two-year college. Added to the findings of these two studies, have been those of two major national research studies, English in the Two-Year College[3] and Salvage, Redirection,

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[1]Richard M. Bossone, The Training and Work of California Public Junior College Teachers of English (Riverside: Office of County Superintendent of Schools, 1964).

[2]Richard M. Bossone, Remedial English Instruction in California Public Junior Colleges: An Analysis and Evaluation of Current Practices (Sacramento: State Department of California, 1966).

[3]Samuel Weingarten, et al., English in the Two-Year College (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

or Custody? Remedial Education in the Community Junior College,[4] which corroborated the author's findings and which emphasized the fact that the two-year colleges are not doing an effective job of educating the remedial English student and that clear definitions of intent and more imaginative procedures are necessary if reform is to occur.

All of these studies plus the bewildered looks of many remedial English students (which I came to know as I visited classrooms) haunted me and compelled me to continue to work in this confused and neglected area of semi-ordered chaos. But more important is that, in our times of growing unrest and increasing welfare rolls, I believe no one can afford the luxury of simply not "giving a damn."

The Problem

Every year millions of students who are entering college are placed in some form of remedial English that is loosely defined as a non-transferable course which the student must pass in order to be admitted to the regular freshman course that is transferable. In California, which has set the pattern for the open-door two-year college, approximately 70 percent of the entering freshmen fail the English placement examination and are relegated to some form of remedial English. No doubt, as current admissions policies and procedures in the community colleges of The City University of New York make higher education possible for many students who do not meet

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[4]John E. Roueche, Salvage, Redirection or Custody? Remedial Education in the Community Junior College (Washington: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1968).

the admissions criteria of the senior units of The City University, The City University will be faced with the same influx of semi-literate students. Unfortunately, as research[5] shows, the two-year colleges do not know what to do about this growing number of remedial English students, and, because of the ignorance and ineffectual endeavors of many educators, 75 percent of these students are allowed to fail or withdraw in frustration or total defeat. In short, the two-year colleges, by operating at this level of ignorance, indifference, trial and error, or what you will, have simply reduced the concept of a second chance in an open-door college to no chance in a revolving-door college.

I submit that under the present conditions most remedial English programs are generally conducted in a negative, cynical fashion as a screening device to eliminate remedial students as quickly as possible, rather than being conducted in a positive, informed fashion as a retaining device to diagnose and remedy the students linguistic deficiencies. If we are to eliminate this sham, this license to fail students, immediate action must be taken. One initial step in that direction would be to conduct research on the writing problems of these students, more specifically those problems which actually determine placement, so that we might have a better idea of what we are

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[5] Ibid.

trying to remedy and what type of instructor and instruction is needed. Thus, with this purpose in mind, this study was undertaken.

General Purpose and Objectives

If the chief function of remediation is to insure proper learning, then it becomes increasingly important that plans for remediation be thoughtfully conceived and executed, and this cannot be done without a diagnosis of the individual's linguistic problems and needs. Therefore, the general purpose of this study is to make a diagnosis of the writing problems which are typical of the junior college student who has been assigned to a non-transferable remedial English class which the student must take if he fails the English placement examination and which he must pass to be admitted to a freshman English transfer course. Because the major objective of the remedial course is usually to teach the student to write expository compositions of merit, free of gross errors, the diagnostic test focuses mainly on the student's ability to write such prose. Further, because research by Godshalk has proven that "the combination of objective items (which measure accurately some skills involved in writing) with an essay, (which measures directly, if somewhat less accurately, the writing itself) proved to be more valid than either type of item alone,"[6] this format is used.

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[6]Edward S. Noyes, "Introduction," The Measurement of Writing Ability (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966), p. vi.

Objectives relevant to the general purpose are:

1. To discover what writing factors in the grading of compositions were considered to be most important by teachers of remedial English and their chairmen in four community colleges of The City University of New York.
2. To discover what common errors were considered to be gross errors, that is, errors that would label college themes as failing regardless of the level of their content by teachers of remedial English and their chairmen in four community colleges of The City University of New York.
3. To make an analysis of the written responses of the teachers to remedial English students' initial compositions and the writing problems of these students in the above colleges as demonstrated by their performances in writing initial compositions.
4. To make an item analysis of errors made in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics by these remedial English students and to compare their achievement with Princeton High School college preparatory seniors.

5. To determine the errors in spelling which these remedial English students make and compare these errors with those made by college freshmen reported in Pollock's study.[7]
6. To note the extent of the remedial English students' vocabulary as it compares with freshmen at Michigan State University.
7. To establish the content validity and reliability of these diagnostic instruments.
8. To recommend possible courses of action for improving the teaching of these students.

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[7]Thomas Clark Pollock, "Spelling Report," College English, XVI (November, 1954), 102-109

PART II

PLAN AND PROCEDURE

Institutions, Personnel, and Testing Population Involved

To obtain data needed to accomplish the general purpose and objectives of this study, the investigator chose four community colleges in The City University of New York, namely, Bronx Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York City Community College, and Staten Island Community College, which offer non-transferable remedial English courses to those students who fail the English placement examination and which they must pass to be admitted to transferable freshmen English courses.

Prior to the beginning of classes in the fall semester, 1968, the investigator met with the English chairmen to discuss the research study and to decide upon a composition scale described below. After this meeting the chairmen selected members from their departments who were willing to participate in the study. At the beginning of the semester, the investigator visited the colleges in order to explain and to insure proper administration of testing materials described below. The total number of people involved was as follows: 4 chairmen of English departments, 15 teachers of remedial English, and 343 remedial English students.

It should be noted that figures presented in the study are based on the replies of the above number of people to the items submitted to them. Where totals differ from those figures, it is because some of the items were answered erroneously or incompletely.

Materials and Tests Utilized in the Study

As mentioned earlier, because research on the measurement of writing ability has proven that "the combination of objective items (which measure accurately some skills involved in writing) with an essay (which measures directly, if somewhat less accurately, the writing itself) proved to be more valid than either type of item alone,"[8] the following materials and tests were utilized to make an analysis of the writing problems of remedial English students in community colleges of The City University of New York:

Composition Scale and Evaluation Sheet

In an attempt to encourage more uniform standards, as well as a more careful consideration of all factors involved in writing ability, the investigator developed a Composition Scale: Grading Standards (see model in Appendix B). The rationale for this scale was based on the research findings of Diederich[9] concerning factors in judgments of writing ability, as well as the prepared statements of recommended practices in composition evaluation prepared by state and regional English associations in California, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

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[8]Noyes, p. vi.

[9]Paul B. Diederich, John W. French, and Sydell T. Carlton, Factors in Judgments of Writing Ability, Research Bulletin, RB-61-15 (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1961).

The scale was submitted to the four chairmen at an initial meeting and approved by them. Once agreement was reached upon the factors to be used in judgments of writing ability, the investigator asked all chairmen and teachers involved in the study to specify what weight in percentages (from 10-100%) they would attach to the following factors: ideas; organization; sentence structure; wording; punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. Although it was comforting to find no one was entirely blind to any of these factors, it was disheartening to note some of the extreme differences in emphasis (Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE I

ATTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENTIAL WEIGHTS IN PERCENTAGES TO WRITING FACTORS BY 19 TEACHERS

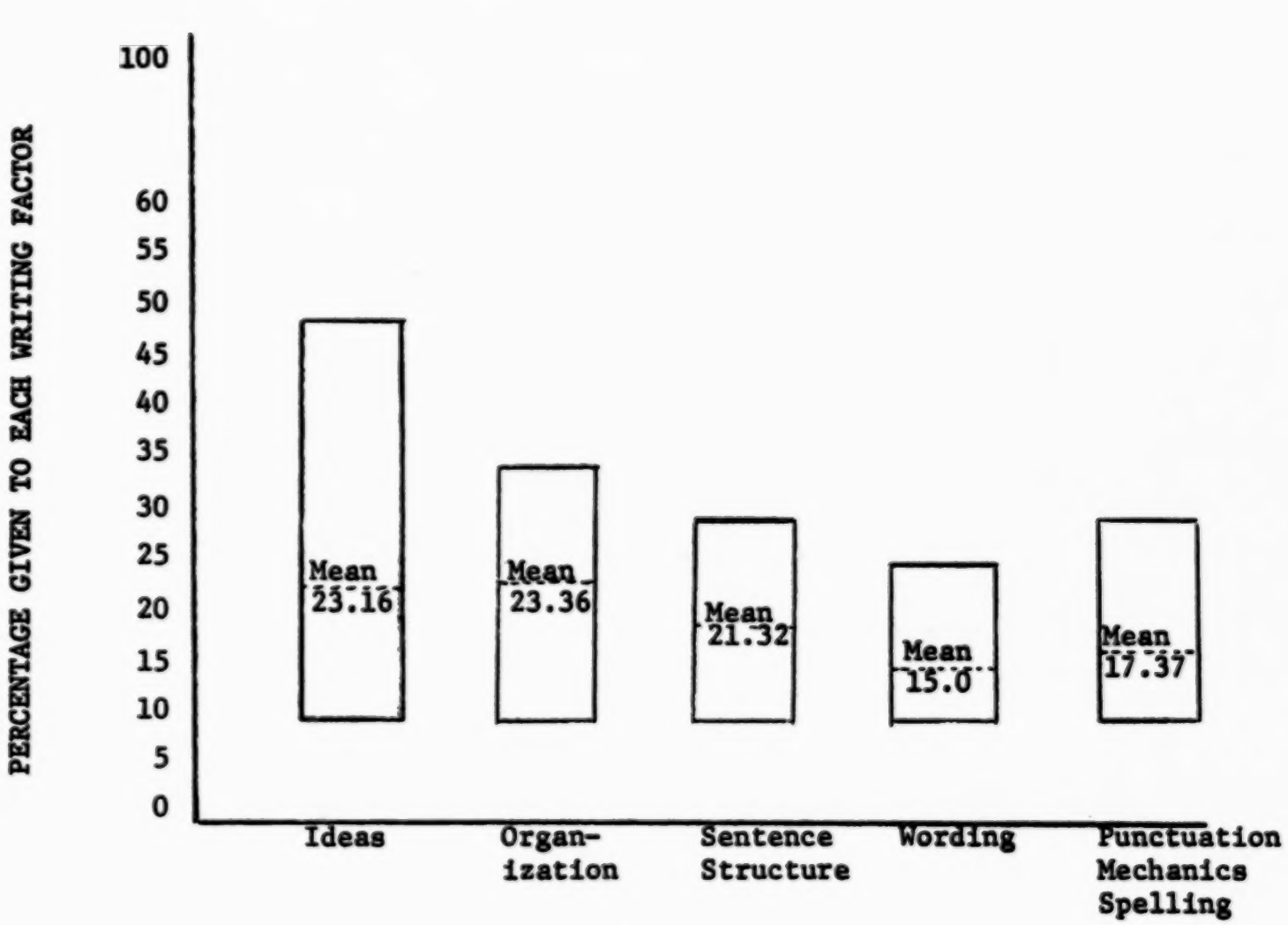


TABLE 2

NUMBER OF TEACHERS WHO ATTRIBUTED DIFFERENTIAL WEIGHTS IN PERCENTAGES TO EACH WRITING FACTOR

Percent	Ideas	Organ-ization	Sentence Structure	Wording	Punctuation Mechanics Spelling
10	2	2	2	7	7
15	4	3	3	7	3
20	4	5	4	3	4
25	3	4	8	2	3
30	4	3	2		2
35	1	2			
40					
45					
50	1				
55					
60					
65					
70					
75					
80					
85					
90					
95					
100					
Total Number of Teachers	19	19	19	19	19

The above tables indicate that the largest variation among teachers as to what weight to give a writing factor was in regard to the "ideas" factor. The range on this item was from 10% to 50% or a range of 40 points.

The factor "wording" showed the most constancy among teachers. The range on this item was from 10% to 25% or a range of 15 points (Table 1).

The over-all picture clearly shows that at present there is no definite agreement among teachers as to the importance of each individual factor in grading a composition (Table 2).

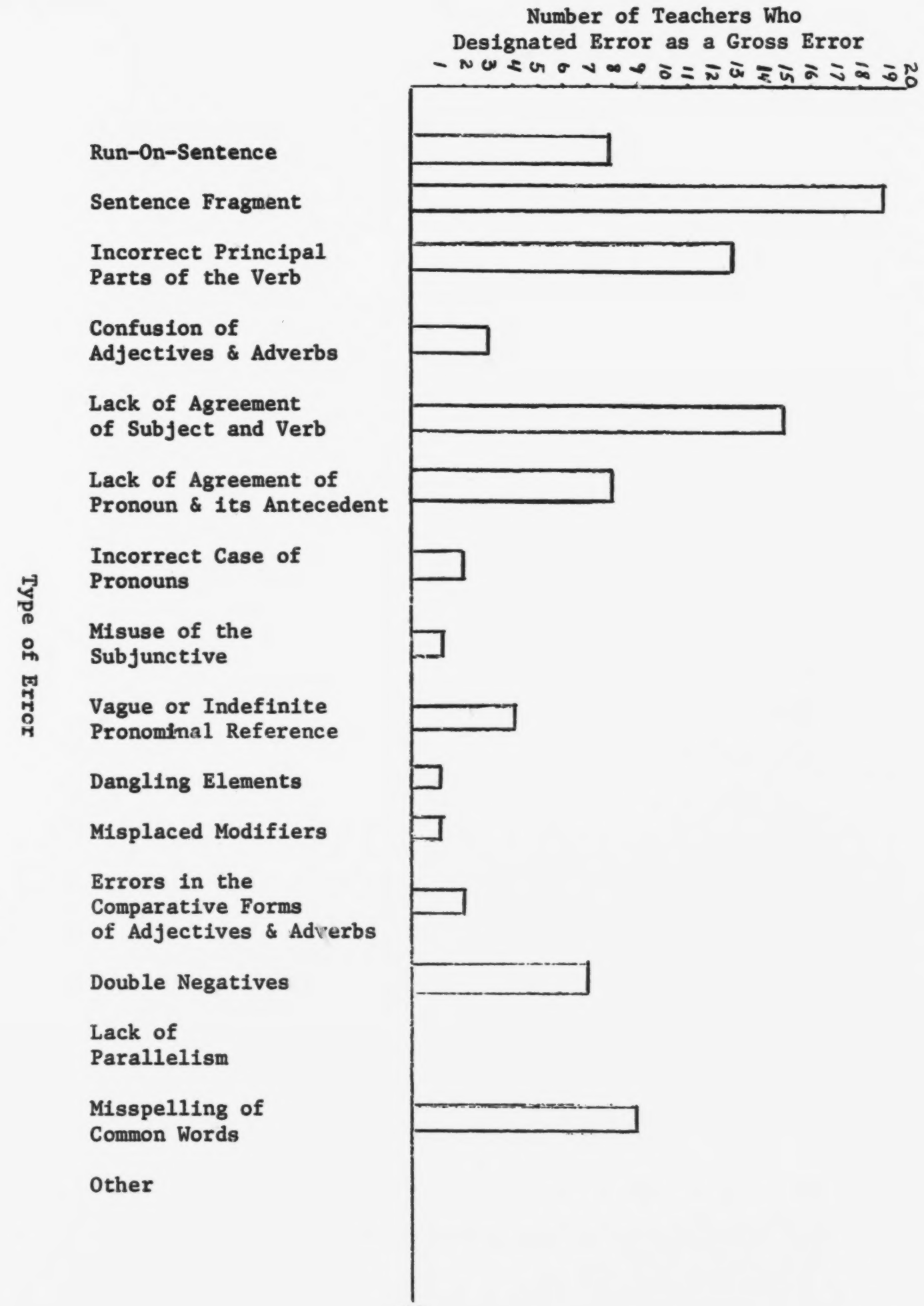
In addition to the composition scale, an evaluation sheet listing the five factors was utilized for noting the teacher's comments on each student's composition. (See evaluation sheet in Appendix B).

Checklist of Gross Errors

Because the major objective of the remedial English course is usually to teach the student to write expository compositions of merit free of gross errors, not only must we focus on the factors which contribute to meritorious writing but also we must define what is meant by gross errors. As a result, the investigator submitted a list of possible gross errors, that is, errors that would label college themes as failing regardless of the level of their content, to chairmen and teachers and asked them to list in order of importance any of those errors suggested, plus others they cared to specify, which they considered to be most grievous (Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 3

TEACHERS' DESIGNATION OF GROSS ERRORS


Number of Teachers Who Designated Error as a Gross Error
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
Type of Error
Run-On-Sentence
Sentence Fragment
Incorrect Principal Parts of the Verb
Confusion of Adjectives & Adverbs
Lack of Agreement of Subject and Verb
Lack of Agreement of Pronoun & its Antecedent
Incorrect Case of Pronouns
Misuse of the Subjunctive
Vague or Indefinite Pronominal Reference
Dangling Elements
Misplaced Modifiers
Errors in the Comparative Forms of Adjectives & Adverbs
Double Negatives
Lack of Parallelism
Misspelling of Common Words
Other

The above table reveals that there is very little agreement among teachers as to what constitutes a gross error with the exception of the "sentence fragment," "lack of agreement of subject and verb," and "incorrect principal parts of the verb."

Table 4 reveals that there is even less agreement among teachers when asked to list gross errors in order of importance. Six teachers rated the "sentence fragment" as Number 1; seven teachers rated the "run-on sentence" as Number 2; and six teachers rated the "lack of agreement of subject and verb" as Number 3. Beyond this, there does not seem to be much agreement about rank order of importance.

TABLE 4

TEACHERS' LISTINGS OF GROSS ERRORS IN RANK ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

Type of Error	Number of Teachers	Order of Importance
The run-on-sentence	4	1
	7	2
	1	3
The sentence fragment	6	1
	5	2
	1	3
	2	4
Incorrect principal parts of the verb	3	2
	3	3
	2	4
	1	6
Confusion of adjectives and adverbs	2	4
Lack of agreement of subject and verb	2	1
	6	3
	2	4
Lack of agreement of pronoun and its antecedent	1	3
	3	4
	2	5
	1	7
Incorrect case of pronouns	1	5
Misuse of the subjunctive	1	6
Vague or indefinite pronominal reference	1	2
	1	6
Dangling elements	3	5
Misplaced modifiers	1	5
Errors in the comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs	1	6
Double negatives	2	1
	2	5
	1	6

Lack of parallelism	0	0
Misspelling of common words	1	1
	1	3
	2	4
	1	7
	1	8
Others	No other errors were specified	

Tests

Recognition of Errors in Grammar, Punctuation, and Mechanics

This GPM (grammar, punctuation, and mechanics) test covers a representation of errors that occurred most frequently in 20,000 college freshman themes as reported by John C. Hodges of University of Tennessee and, in particular, those errors marked incorrectly most and least frequently by approximately 500 Princeton High School twelfth grade college preparatory students as reported by Paul B. Diederich and Sydell T. Carlton of Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.

Spelling

This test covers 43 words which were representative of words and word groups among the 100 most frequently misspelled words in college out of 31,375 misspellings noted in the Thomas Clark Pollock "Spelling Report." Of the 43 words used, 31 words were also among the 100 words most frequently misspelled in seventh, eighth, and twelfth grades as well as in college.

Vocabulary

This test has 60 three-choice vocabulary items, answered correctly by 50-59% of Michigan State University freshmen, taken from the tests used by Diederich and Palmer in their study (1956) of the familiarity in grades 11 and 13 of 4,800 of the 20,000 words that occur most frequently in general reading.

In summation, it should be noted that the composition scale was utilized mainly to evaluate the essay and, in particular, such factors as ideas, organization, and wording which are not readily tested by objective examinations; the objective examinations were used mainly to analyze errors made by students in grammar (syntax or sentence structure), punctuation, mechanics, and spelling, the other factors held to be important on the composition scale. It should also be noted that the administering of such an instrument and tests not only serves to diagnose problems in writing skills but also serves to determine to what extent teachers of remedial English agree that these skills are necessary for successful college work, thereby helping to illucidate for students in advance what qualities their papers should exemplify.

Content Validation of Tests

A point-biserial correlation was used as a measure of content validity to determine internal consistency among the items within the tests. Nunnally states that the chief value of the coefficients obtained is to point out ambiguities and arrive at some fair measure of performance:

> Any item that correlates near zero with test scores should be carefully inspected.... It is more likely that the item is excessively difficult or easy, is ambiguous, or actually has little to do with the topic. Unless there are strong grounds

> for deciding otherwise, such items generally should be discarded. Among the remaining items, the items that correlate higher with total scores generally are better items....[10]

Items which received coefficients of .20 - .29 were considered passable items. Those which received coefficients of .30 - .39 were considered good items, and those which received coefficients of .40 and over were considered excellent items. Thus all items on the tests have been examined on statistical rather than a priori grounds.

Test Reliability

The Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 was used to determine the reliability of the test.[11]

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[10] Jum Nunnally, Psychometric Theory (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1967), p. 242.

[11] For further explanation of this formula see Nunnally, p. 194.

PART III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Evaluation of Themes

The investigator asked the teachers involved in the study to submit five compositions which they considered representative of their students' initial writing performances along with the written evaluation form which demonstrated how they weighed the five factors on the composition scale: ideas; organization; sentence structure; wording; and punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. In addition to the above, the teachers were asked to submit the evaluation forms utilized in grading an entire set of papers. The total number of sample compositions received was 78, and the total number of evaluation forms (with written comments or symbols used to indicate weight given to each factor) was 218.

The compositions and evaluation forms were read by the investigator to see how the teachers specifically utilized the composition scale and what factors received the most attention; second, to note what gross errors students committed in writing in accordance with teachers' scale of frequency; and, finally, to draw some general conclusions about the students' writing abilities in relation to the five factors cited in the composition scale, with particular attention to level of writing maturity as reflected in sentence structure.

From a careful reading of the 78 compositions and the comments or symbols used on the evaluation forms to indicate how the teachers utilized the composition scale, the investigator concluded that on the whole there was a definite reluctance on the part of the

majority of teachers (approximately 85 percent) to engage in the analytic method of rating compositions. Rather, they seem to prefer the general impression method. With the majority of teachers, comments based on the five factors listed on the evaluation form were either non-existent or so brief as to be of no value at all. Instead of individual comments based on the five factors, a general comment was more frequently used which was vague about suggestions for revision, negative in tone, and indicated that the paper was a "D" or "F." Of these papers approximately 30 percent were assigned an "F," 40 percent a "D," and 20 percent a "C," and the remaining 10 percent a "B." One paper, however, was assigned an "A."

Of the remaining teachers (approximately 15 percent), those who employed the analytic method, comments tended to be more specific about suggestions for revision and more positive in tone as opposed to comments by those teachers who used the general impression method. The teachers who used the analytic method tended to assign a slightly larger percentage of passing grades: approximately 20 percent of the papers were assigned an "F," 45 percent a "D," 25 percent a "C," and 10 percent a "B" (with one exception an "A" was assigned); these teachers' comments seemed to reflect more concern about acknowledging some success the student may have achieved as opposed to simply reminding him he had failed — again.

In addition to the "colleague variable" (the tendency of several raters to vary from each other in their evaluations, as in this case, the commitment which each rater felt toward the criteria

being employed), other variables may have contributed to these differences in grading and they should be noted:

(1) The "writer variable" (factors which may have influenced the writer's performances, such as illness, distractions, anxiety, etc.)

(2) The "assignment variable" (the topic, mode of discourse, and time afforded for writing) which, in this case, judging from the topics on which students were assigned to write and mode of discourse, was a variable that obviously must be taken into account; for example, topics ranged from "What You Would Do If You Were the Next President" (a formidable topic, to say the least, considering that our President-elect was not even able to tell us) to "My Best Interest"; mode of discourse ranged from simple description to exposition or argumentation.

(3) Finally, the "rater variable" (characterized by the rater's personal feelings and attitudes toward the writer or remedial student, as well as rater fatigue which may lead him to become severe, lenient, or erratic in his evaluations), which, in this case, judging from the tone of the comments, was an important variable.

In order of frequency, factors (when noted) that received the most attention were as follows: first, "punctuation, mechanics, and spelling"; second, "sentence structure"; third, "wording"; fourth, "organization"; fifth, "ideas."

In regard to "punctuation, mechanics, and spelling," most comments generally dealt with the misuse of the comma and misspelling of common words.

In regard to "sentence structure," most comments generally dealt with agreement of subject and verb, tense, sentence fragments, ambiguous pronoun reference, lack of agreement of pronoun and its antecedent. It should be noted, that the investigator made a cursory analysis of the sentence structure in these 78 compositions, in accordance with the "T-unit" concept[12] as employed by Kellogg W. Hunt in his research on grammatical structures written at three grade levels, and found that the sentence structure employed by these students demonstrated roughly a range of writing ability from the eighth grade level up to the twelfth grade level. When time and money permit, a more thorough analysis should be made of this factor which undoubtedly has significant bearing upon instructional procedures that need to be considered in working with these students.

In regard to "wording," most comments dealt with the student having an inadequate vocabulary, using too many cliches, and employing faulty diction.

In regard to "organization," most comments dealt with lack of coherence, that is, not showing the connection between ideas.

In regard to "ideas," most comments dealt with the lack of clarity, that is, being too vague and too general.

The investigator from his careful reading of 78 compositions noted many of the same problems as cited above but concluded that the most serious writing problems of these students centered around "organization," "ideas," and "sentence structure," in short, their

[12]For a complete explanation of this concept see Kellogg W. Hunt, Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), pp. 6-53.

inability to think clearly, to see a design, to know where they are going, or how they want to get there. Judging by the number and the extent of the teachers' comments not as much attention was given to these factors as was devoted to "punctuation, mechanics, and spelling." Perhaps this is because it is easier to be a proof reader than a critic.

Statistical Evaluation of Tests

Of the 343 remedial English students in the original sample, six were dropped because of noninterpretable replies. The total number of students from each college were as follows:

Bronx Community College	102
Manhattan Community College	32
New York City Community College	104
Staten Island Community College	105

Distribution of Difficulty Levels by Item and Results of Point-biserial Correlation for Each Test

The statistical evaluation of the data included distribution of difficulty levels for each test (Tables 5, 6, & 7). Based on the percentage of correct responses for each item, a distribution using five categories was formed: 0-20 percent, 21-40 percent, 41-60 percent, 61-80 percent, and 81-100 percent.

Nunnally recommends that within each percentage interval those items with the highest correlations be selected. The greatest amount of items would be chosen from the 41-60 percentage interval, with decreasing amounts from intervals above and below this point. By doing this an approximate normal distribution may be achieved or a distribution in which 40 to 60 percent of the subjects can pass most of the questions and still have other subjects do very well and very poorly. The test should be appropriate in degree of difficulty as the criterion demands. Usually, at least 30 items are required to obtain a sufficiently high reliability.[13]

The results of the point-biserial correlation were based on corrected scores; guessing by students is thereby accounted for. The GPM test showed 42 percent (27 items) of the items to have coefficients of less than .20. The items on the vocabulary test had 38 percent (23 items) of the coefficients below .20, and the spelling test had 5 percent (2 items) of the coefficients below .20 (Tables 5, 6, 7)..

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[13]Nunnally, pp. 242-243

TABLE 5

GPM TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

	GPM TEST N=302			GPM TEST N-302	
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
(0-20%)			14	26.2	.01
22	5.6	.04	58	26.8	.18
39	7.0	.08	65	27.2	.11
63	8.3	.17	64	27.5	.23
20	10.9	.10	48	29.1	.20
62	14.6	.32	51	30.1	.18
15	15.9	.07	7	31.5	.01
59	17.2	.14	11	32.5	.02
30	17.5	.19	9	33.1	.14
6	17.9	.23	28	33.1	.07
25	18.2	.04	52	34.8	.29
13	18.9	.22	57	35.1	.41
(21-40%)			3	35.8	.00
19	23.5	.12	50	37.4	.24
43	23.5	.27	23	39.4	.07
53	25.2	.27	(41-60%)		
54	25.2	.27	36	42.4	.09

TABLE 5 (Continued)

GPM TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

	GPM TEST N=302			GPM TEST N=302	
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
60	43.0	.27	47	57.6	.49
8	43.7	.21	2	57.9	.21
17	45.7	.04	40	59.9	.32
49	46.4	.41	34	60.3	.06
10	49.3	.29	(61-80%)		
5	50.7	.43	46	62.9	.19
37	51.0	.42	33	65.6	.36
12	51.7	.21	38	68.9	.39
21	51.7	.34	45	73.2	.54
1	52.0	.09	31	74.8	.42
32	53.3	.00	27	78.8	.25
44	53.6	.20	18	79.1	.38
61	55.0	.40	16	79.5	.25
41	55.3	.20	24	80.1	.17
56	56.0	.39	(81-100%)		
4	56.6	.31	35	84.1	.34
55	56.6	.05	42	86.1	.40
26	57.3	.23	29	88.1	.40

TABLE 6

VOCABULARY TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

VOCABULARY TEST N=294			VOCABULARY TEST N=294		
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
(0-20%)			41	36.7	.40
(21-40%)			35	37.4	.19
56	22.4	.23	26	38.1	.26
32	25.9	.06	22	38.4	.11
38	25.9	.31	28	40.1	.16
42	29.3	.14	46	40.1	.17
8	30.3	.18	40	40.5	.27
60	30.6	.15	39	40.8	.25
10	31.3	.28	59	40.8	.28
30	34.4	.23	(41-60%)		
53	35.0	.35	14	41.2	.15
13	35.4	.12	19	42.2	.17
16	35.4	.07	44	42.2	.22
1	35.7	.29	58	42.2	.33
51	36.1	.27	36	43.5	.23
6	36.4	.13	27	43.9	.31
48	36.4	.24	45	45.6	.30

TABLE 6 (Continued)

VOCABULARY TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

VOCABULARY TEST N=294			VOCABULARY TEST N=294		
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
29	46.9	.08	12	57.5	.21
52	46.9	.34	17	58.8	.19
54	47.3	.48	33	58.8	.38
31	47.6	.19	34	58.8	.10
7	49.0	.34	11	59.9	.22
55	50.0	.18	43	59.9	.16
3	50.3	.26	37	60.2	.38
15	50.3	.12	(61-80%)		
57	50.7	.30	21	63.6	.35
24	51.0	.20	20	67.0	.08
23	51.4	.25	4	67.7	.16
49	51.7	.41	47	68.4	.39
9	53.4	.30	25	69.7	.29
50	53.7	.39	18	70.1	.14
5	57.1	.34	(81-100%)		
2	57.5	.22			

TABLE 7

SPELLING TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

	SPELLING TEST N=302			SPELLING TEST N=302	
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
(0-20%)			43	62.9	.38
(21-40%)			12	73.8	.31
2	40.1	.10	18	74.5	.24
(41-60%)			36	75.8	.31
16	44.7	.20	23	79.5	.25
40	45.4	.40	(81-100%)		
9	50.0	.39	17	82.8	.22
19	51.7	.43	6	83.4	.35
41	55.3	.44	28	84.1	.30
37	57.0	.28	3	84.8	.31
15	57.6	.29	5	85.1	.28
31	59.6	.37	25	85.1	.34
21	60.9	.41	1	86.8	.11
(61-80%)			11	86.8	.30
27	61.3	.36	7	87.7	.31
34	62.6	.36	26	87.7	.24

TABLE 7 (Continued)

SPELLING TEST: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY AND POINT-BISERIAL CORRELATIONS CALCULATED FROM CORRECTED SCORES

	SPELLING TEST N=302			SPELLING TEST N=302	
Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis	Item #	Percentage of Ss Choosing Correct Response	r-bis
32	88.1	.41	4	93.0	.30
13	88.4	.22	24	93.7	.37
22	88.7	.30	38	93.7	.47
42	88.7	.45	39	94.0	.50
33	90.7	.46	20	94.7	.28
35	91.4	.38	30	94.7	.48
8	91.7	.36	10	96.0	.33
29	92.7	.36	14	96.4	.22

Evaluation of Items Which Received a Higher Percentage of Responses for Incorrect Options than Correct Options

The ability to answer an item correctly is, to a large degree, a reflection of the student's earlier training. For example, on the GPM (grammar, punctuation, and mechanics) test, students who received more training in punctuation should do better on those questions which relate to punctuation than they would do on questions dealing with double negatives or incorrect principal parts of the verb.

Some items are more difficult than others, and this, of course, is not unexpected. One would expect, however, that for each item the correct option would receive the highest percentage of response for that item. This was not always the case with these examinations. Twenty-six items on the GPM test received the highest percentage of responses for answers other than the correct one (Table 9). The same is true for 18 items on the vocabulary test (Table 10) and 4 items on the spelling test (Table 11). Some of these cases are quite striking. For instance, on item 22 of the GPM test, the correct response was answered by 5.6 percent of the students, while the incorrect alternatives to that item received much higher responses (Table 8).

TABLE 8

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ITEM IN WHICH THE INCORRECT
OPTIONS WERE ANSWERED BY MORE STUDENTS THAN THE CORRECT OPTION
(CORRECT OPTION IS NUMBER 1, (5.6%))

Options	Percentage of Students Answering Each Option
0, No error	55.6
1, The Mona Lisa has provoked a great	5.6
2, amount of discussion; no one can	26.8
3, explain the lady's inscrutable smile.	10.6
4, No answer	1.3

Items in Table 8 indicate the type of training received by the students, a lack of training in a particular area, or both.

TABLE 9

ITEMS ON THE GPM TEST WHICH
RECEIVED A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
ON THE INCORRECT OPTIONS THAN ON THE CORRECT OPTION
(The underlined option for each item is the correct one.)

Item Number	Option 0	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	No Answer
3	35.8	9.9	47.7	6.3	.3
6	40.7	37.4	3.3	17.9	.7
7	31.5	7.6	57.3	2.6	1.0
9	33.1	4.0	6.0	56.3	.7
11	32.5	11.3	53.6	2.3	.3
13	18.9	6.0	71.2	3.6	.3
14	51.0	26.2	16.9	4.6	1.3
15	63.6	15.9	12.6	7.3	.7
19	63.2	12.3	23.5	.7	.3
20	25.5	24.8	37.4	10.9	1.3
22	55.6	5.6	26.8	10.6	1.3
23	42.7	2.0	39.4	13.9	2.0
25	67.2	18.2	8.9	5.0	.7
28	40.4	14.9	33.1	11.3	.3
30	44.7	13.2	17.5	24.2	.3
39	58.6	7.0	13.6	17.2	3.6
43	53.0	23.5	5.0	14.6	4.0
48	29.1	5.0	11.9	47.4	6.6
52	36.8	17.5	34.8	3.0	7.9
53	24.2	4.0	39.1	25.2	7.6

TABLE 9 (Continued)

ITEM ON THE GPM TEST WHICH
RECEIVED A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
ON THE INCORRECT OPTIONS THAN ON THE CORRECT OPTION
(The underlined option for each item is the correct one.)

Item Number	Option 0	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	No Answer
54	47.4	12.3	25.2	7.6	7.6
58	36.8	26.8	21.9	5.0	9.6
59	42.4	17.2	26.8	2.3	11.3
62	42.4	26.2	4.0	14.6	12.9
63	14.2	53.6	8.9	8.3	14.9
64	32.5	23.8	27.5	3.3	12.9

TABLE 10

ITEMS ON THE VOCABULARY TEST WHICH
RECEIVED A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
ON THE INCORRECT OPTIONS THAN ON THE CORRECT OPTION
(The underlined option for each item is the correct one.)

Item Number	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	No Answer
1	51.7	35.7	11.6	1.0
6	36.4	45.9	16.7	1.0
8	48.3	30.3	19.7	1.7
10	31.3	18.4	47.6	2.7
13	35.4	49.7	13.6	1.4
14	41.2	47.6	9.2	2.0
16	35.4	54.1	9.5	1.0
19	13.3	42.2	44.2	.3
22	13.9	45.9	38.4	1.7
26	12.2	38.1	46.3	3.4
28	8.8	40.1	50.0	1.0
32	27.9	25.9	43.2	3.1
38	25.9	49.7	21.1	3.4
41	19.4	40.1	36.7	3.7
42	29.3	17.7	50.0	3.1
46	11.6	40.1	44.6	3.7
48	45.9	36.4	12.2	5.4
56	15.6	50.0	22.4	11.9

TABLE 11

ITEMS ON THE SPELLING TEST WHICH
RECEIVED A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
ON THE INCORRECT OPTION THAN ON THE CORRECT OPTION
(The underlined option for each item is the correct one.)

Item Number	Option 1	Option 2	No Answer
2	59.6	<u>40.1</u>	.3
9	50.0	<u>50.0</u>	
16	54.6	<u>44.7</u>	.7
40	50.7	<u>45.4</u>	4.0

Results of Grammar, Punctuation, and Mechanics Test: Comparison of Princeton High School Students with Community College Students

Table 12 shows the percentage of students choosing incorrect responses to the 65 items on the GPM test both at Princeton High School and at the Community Colleges of The City University of New York. Twenty-two items were marked incorrectly more often by the Princeton students. The remaining 43 items were marked incorrectly more often by the community college students. When comparing the two groups of students, it becomes obvious that there is a greater percentage difference between both groups for each of the 43 items than between both groups for each of the 22 items, i.e., the community college students answered items incorrectly more often and by a larger spread of percentage points.

At this point each individual item should be examined for content, especially those which were answered incorrectly more often by the Princeton group.

TABLE 12

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING INCORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON A GPM TEST: PRINCETON HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN REMEDIAL ENGLISH CLASSES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF CUNY

Item Number	Princeton H. S. Seniors (N=500)	Community College Freshmen (N=302)
1	67.0%	48.0%
2	8.0	42.1
3	72.0	64.2
4	0.0	43.4
5	0.0	49.3
6	67.0	82.1
7	76.0	68.5
8	10.0	56.3
9	67.0	66.9
10	4.0	50.7
11	76.0	67.5
12	13.0	48.3
13	86.0	81.1
14	79.0	73.8
15	81.0	84.1
16	0.0	20.5
17	44.0	54.3
18	0.0	20.9

TABLE 12 (Continued)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING INCORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON A GPM TEST: PRINCETON HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN REMEDIAL ENGLISH CLASSES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF CUNY

Item Number	Princeton H. S. Seniors (N=500)	Community College Freshmen (N=302)
19	84.0%	76.5%
20	100.0	89.1
21	16.0	48.3
22	83.0	94.4
23	32.0	60.5
24	6.0	19.9
25	83.0	81.8
26	60.0	42.7
27	0.0	21.2
28	72.0	66.9
29	0.0	11.9
30	74.0	82.5
31	16.0	25.2
32	61.0	46.7
33	0.0	34.4
34	62.0	39.7
35	0.0	15.9

TABLE 12 (Continued)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING INCORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON GPM TEST: PRINCETON HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN REMEDIAL ENGLISH CLASSES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF CUNY.

Item Number	Princeton H. S. Seniors (N=500)	Community College Freshmen (N=302)
36	78.0%	57.6%
37	4.0	49.0
38	11.0	31.1
39	80.0	93.0
40	16.0	40.1
41	68.0	44.7
42	0.0	13.9
43	48.0	76.5
44	48.0	46.4
45	0.0	26.8
46	44.0	37.1
47	5.0	42.4
48	74.0	70.9
49	8.0	53.6
50	78.0	62.6
51	81.0	69.9
52	27.0	65.2
53	4.0	74.8

TABLE 12 (continued)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING INCORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON A GPM TEST: PRINCETON HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN REMEDIAL ENGLISH CLASSES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF CUNY

Item Number	Princeton H. S. Seniors (N=500)	Community College Freshmen (N=302)
54	44.0%	74.8%
55	72.0	43.4
56	10.0	44.0
57	32.0	64.9
58	65.0	73.2
59	64.0	82.8
60	38.0	57.0
61	52.0	45.0
62	68.0	85.4
63	65.0	91.7
64	37.0	72.5
65	62.0	72.8

Results of Spelling Test: Rank Order of Words Found To Be Most Difficult

Certain words, such as "all right," proved to be very difficult for the majority of students. The rank order of difficulty for words included in the spelling tested are noted in Table 13.

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON SPELLING TEST IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY

ITEM NUMBER	ACTUAL WORD AS IT APPEARED ON EXAMINATION	PERCENTAGE OF Ss ANSWERING CORRECT OPTION
2	alright	40.1
16	loosing	44.7
40	choosen	45.4
9	discribe	50.0
19	occured	51.7
41	preform	55.3
37	personel	57.0
15	its (possessive form)	57.6
31	writting	59.6
21	recieve	60.9
27	they're (possessive form)	61.3
34	refering	62.6
43	enviroment	62.9
12	grammer	73.8
18	ocassion	74.5
36	privilege	75.8
23	separate	79.5
17	necessary	82.8
6	business	83.4

TABLE 13 (continued)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON SPELLING TEST IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY

ITEM NUMBER	ACTUAL WORD AS IT APPEARED ON EXAMINATION	PERCENTAGE OF Ss ANSWERING CORRECT OPTION
28	too (meaning also)	84.1 %
3	begining	84.8
5	benefit	85.1
25	studying	85.1
1	acquaint	86.8
11	goverment	86.8
7	decesion	87.7
26	surprise	87.7
32	exist	88.1
13	immediately	88.4
22	recommend	83.7
42	professor	88.7
33	preced	90.7
35	sucess	91.4
8	definete	91.7
29	tried	92.7
4	believe	93.0
24	similir	93.7

TABLE 13 (continued)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CHOOSING CORRECT RESPONSES TO ITEMS ON SPELLING TEST IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DIFFICULTY

ITEM NUMBER	ACTUAL WORD AS IT APPEARED ON EXAMINATION	PERCENTAGE OF Ss ANSWERING CORRECT OPTION
38	then	93.7
39	principal	94.0
20	realize	94.7
30	weather	94.7
10	experience	96.0
14	interest	96.4

Results of Kuder-Richardson Reliability Coefficient

The Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficients obtained for the tests were as follows:

Grammar test	.68
Vocabulary test	.71
Spelling test	.78

Desirable reliabilities differ according to purpose. When a test is intended only for use in studying groups, a reliability coefficient around .75 may be sufficient to make fairly accurate comparisons.

In view of the coefficient found for both the item analysis and the test of reliability, we may draw the following conclusions. The items on the spelling test proved to be better predictors for that test than did the items on the grammar and vocabulary examinations prove to be for their respective tests. Items on the spelling test contributed more to the final score than did the items on the other tests to their respective scores. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that only two (4.7%) items proved to have non-significant correlations on the spelling test, as compared to five (8.3%) on the vocabulary test, and to seventeen (26.2%) on the GPM test. It is also interesting to note that the GPM test which had the lowest percentage of significant correlations, also had the lowest reliability coefficient while the spelling test which had the highest percentage of significant correlations also had the highest reliability coefficient.

PART IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has presented a picture of the writing problems of remedial English students in four community colleges of The City University of New York drawn from information furnished by 4 chairmen of English departments, 15 teachers of remedial English, and 343 remedial English students in the fall of 1968. The investigator noted what writing factors and gross errors were considered to be most important by teachers of remedial English and their chairmen in the above community colleges; analyzed the responses of the teachers to remedial English students' initial compositions and the writing problems of these students as revealed in these compositions; made an item analysis via objective tests of these students' errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling; and, finally, noted the extent of their vocabulary in comparison to freshmen at Michigan State University. In light of the above data the investigator drew the following conclusions:

1. Among remedial English teachers no definite agreement exists as to what weight in percentage they would attach to the following writing factors: ideas; organization; sentence structure; wording; and punctuation, mechanics, and spelling.
2. Among remedial English teachers there is no definite agreement as to what constitutes a gross error with the exception of the "sentence fragment," "lack of agreement of subject and verb," and "incorrect principle parts of the verb." There is even less agreement among these teachers about rank order of importance of gross errors.

3. In evaluating the students' initial compositions, most of these teachers tend to be reluctant about engaging in the analytic method of rating compositions. Instead, the majority (approximately 85 percent) prefer the general impression method of rating compositions, that is, employing a general comment as opposed to individual comments on the five writing factors noted above. Those teachers who employ the general impression method are generally vague about suggestions for revision, negative in tone, and slightly more severe in grading than those teachers (approximately 15%) who employ the analytic method of evaluating the students' compositions.

4. Writing factors that received the most attention, when noted, by these teachers in the process of evaluating the students' initial compositions are as follows: first, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling; second, sentence structures; third, wording; fourth, organization; fifth, ideas. On the whole most teachers who employed the general impression method tended to ignore most of the factors and overstressed pucntuation, mechanics, and spelling as opposed to those teachers who employed the analytic method and who tried to deal with all factors on a more equitable basis.

5. The most serious writing problems of these remedial English students as seen by the investigator center around "organization," "ideas," and "sentence structure" which unfortunately do not receive as much attention (judging by

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number and extent of teachers' comments) as punctuation, mechanics, and spelling.

6. The grading employed by these teachers reflects not only a lack of agreement about criteria in evaluating students' compositions but also a lack of agreement about placement procedures, objectives of the courses, instructional practices, and proper attitude toward students.

7. Princeton High School students did better than the community college students on the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics test. Not only did the high school students answer more items correctly but they also reflected less percentage of differences on items marked incorrectly.

8. The spelling test proved to be the most reliable and valid of all the objective tests administered and compares favorably with Pollock's "Spelling Report" about words that were found to be difficult for college students on a nationwide basis.

9. The results of the vocabulary test indicate that the extent of the vocabulary of the community college students compares favorably with that of the Michigan State freshmen.

10. The objective tests utilized in this study proved to be reliable with high content validity among items. The spelling test proved to be exceptionally reliable and the vocabulary test proved to be satisfactory. Although the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics test proved to be

reliable, it could be considerably strengthened by eliminating certain items that did not contribute significantly to the examination.

In light of the above findings the investigator recommends the following:

1. Definition of Terms and Identification of Goals.

One of the problems in dealing with the topic of remedial English in the community colleges is that there seems to be no precise definition of what the term remediation means or what its goals should be. In general, it seems to be used loosely to connote teaching which is developmental and corrective as well as remedial. Perhaps this inexact use of terms may be part of the reason for so much confusion about what are the objectives of the program and what is to be accomplished.

Because the terms employed to describe remedial programs are often used rather indiscriminately, with the result that their meanings have become blurred, it might be useful to define the terms in more explicit fashion so that people involved in the program might know more exactly what they are doing.

Perhaps the following definitions might be utilized to help alleviate the confusion:

Developmental teaching (to be distinguished from developmental programs) is the type of instruction given to the majority of pupils within the regular classroom situation to

develop and extend habits and skills needed to comprehend advanced and complex forms of written communication.

Corrective teaching is the type of instruction given within the framework of regular classwork (either to the entire group or to smaller subgroups) and is administered when the gap between achievement and expectation is less than two years, for the purpose of remedying deficiencies in skills that are interfering with adequate achievement.

Remedial teaching (in the strict sense of the word)is the type of instruction given to an individual or small group apart from the classroom for truly disabled learners who need more intensive and highly individualized help.

It is important to point out that these differences between strictly remedial instruction and corrective instruction must be made in order to determine personnel, objectives, instructional technique and materials, physical facilities, and other necessities to expedite a program of instruction. It appears that most community colleges generally are not doing this (see the studies of Bossone and Roueche), and, as a result, programs loosely labeled "remedial" reflect a state of confusion about aims and are proving to be ineffectual for most students who are not properly classified.

2. Placement Procedure.

A single test is a poor indication for placement of students. Objective and essay tests should be employed. Before developing such tests, however, remedial English teachers need to agree on course goals, levels of

student performance and criteria for grading (with full awareness of variables that enter into it) in order to avoid the incorrect and damaging classification of students. If one notes the percentage of teachers reported in this study who assigned "A," "B," and "C" grades to students on their initial compositions, certainly some horrendous misclassification exists or the teachers are far more incompetent than one has a right to imagine.

In addition to the English objective tests and an essay test, which should be given prior to placement (unfortunately in some instances they are not administered at all; other standardized tests are used), the remedial English teacher should require an additional essay to be written in class during the first week to corroborate placement as well as consider supplementary information, such as high school English grades, scores on reading and aptitude tests, letters of recommendations, and interviews with counselors or other staff members.

3. Diagnostic Procedures

More attention must be paid to the process of diagnosis, which is so basic to corrective and remedial teaching, for in reality it serves to dictate the program, that is, where instruction should begin, the exact status of pupil's skill mastery in the area of difficulty, what special problems exist, and in what areas, if any, the pupil is experiencing success. If teachers expect to do an intelligent and comprehensive job in this crucial phase of instruction, they

would do well to become familiar with the three levels of diagnosis as defined by Brueckner and Bond[14] and to develop diagnostic material accordingly.

4. Attitude of Teachers

As the research of Rosenthal and Jacobson[15] on the effects of interpersonal self-fulfilling prophesies shows, one person's expectation for another's behavior could come to serve as a self-fulfulling prophecy. Remedial English teachers, therefore, must have a positive attitude toward their students if they expect them to succeed. In order to do this, remedial English teachers need to become familiar with principles they can apply to help students become more favorably disposed toward English. To reach this very important goal, teachers would do well to begin by reading Mager's book on Developing Attitude Toward Learning.[16] Perhaps after reading this book, teachers will become more aware of the effect their attitudes have in making it more easy or more difficult for the student to experience the subject properly. And certainly after read-

[14]L.J. Brueckner and G. L. Bond, The Diagnosis and Treatment of Learning Difficulties, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), p. 63.

[15]Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, Pygmalion in the Classroom (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968).

[16]Robert F. Mager, Developing Attitude Toward Learning (Palo Alto: Fearon Publishers, 1968).

ing this book, the teacher should realize that the investigator is not advocating the old nostrum: "If you can't lick the problem, sweeten it to death."

5. Need for Student Conferences.

Criticism or marking of a student's paper is perhaps the most difficult test of teaching skill; more specifically, it is a severe test of a teacher's own power to communicate, a test to demonstrate the skill he teaches. A conscientious composition teacher can communicate only so much via symbols and, as he becomes more capable, he will acquire a strong distrust of letter grades, composition symbols, and monosyllabic comments which frequently do more harm than good for the insecure remedial student. Instead, he will depend on teacher-student conferences, conferences which let the student know more specifically how he can improve his writing, conferences which allow the teacher an opportunity to offer warm encouragement to the student rather than an impersonal and abbreviated written comment which reminds him of his inadequacies. It is very difficult to bring about much improvement in a remedial student's writing without such conferences; and, certainly, if a teacher is going to spend approximately a half hour or more alone grading the paper, he should be willing to spend that same amount of time in conference with the student. Because teacher-student conferences are so essential in order to bring about improvement in a remedial student's writing, the

investigator recommends that teachers of remedial English be given a lighter teaching load than other teachers and that they be allowed adequate time periods and office facilities in which to conduct such conferences.

6. District Conferences on Composition.

Members of the English departments of junior colleges should confer with the representatives of high schools from which they draw, as well as the senior colleges they serve, in order to set forth principles and standards in composition for their students. From such conferences or meetings should come a booklet which sets forth objectives, requirements, and procedures of the course, a statement of principles regarding the theme as a whole and the writing factors noted on the composition scale, a guide for the grading of themes and the returning of themes, and models of themes and comments. Though the booklet would be designed primarily for teachers, it should also be designed so it can be read profitably by students who hopefully would gain a clearer picture of what is expected of them, as well as provide a means for measuring their progress toward a mastery of fundamentals.

7. Research and Instructional Service Center.

Various research studies, such as Weingarten's English in the Two-Year College, Bossone's Remedial English in California Public Junior Colleges, and Roueche's Salvage, Redirection, or Custody indicate that the public, as well

as educators, are constantly being reminded that junior college teachers generally are inadequately trained to teach the remedial student who is rapidly coming to dominate the junior college scene and that, even when trained, the teachers find that there is a lack of proper instructional materials. Because miseducated or poorly trained teachers, along with inadequate instructional materials, often serve as a block to effective learning in junior colleges, there is a great need to close the gap that exists between teacher training, materials, and the realities of the rapidly growing open-door junior college. Unfortunately, as the above studies indicate, if 90 percent of more of teachers in the country who are engaged in remedial teaching and who have no special training decided to return to a university, they probably would find no program suitable for their needs and probably would find no encouragement from the majority of university professors who look upon such teaching as an onerous task reserved for graduate teaching assistants.

In addition, the problem is compounded by the fact that at present, there is a paucity of information on the usefulness of existing tests, techniques, and procedures. In the absence of encouragement for systematic investigation, remedial teachers have developed methods and tests haphazardly following no other guideline than mere trial and error in the vague hope that their methods thus developed will work. The inadequacies of existing programs developed

in this manner are revealed repeatedly in the numerous studies cited in the bibliography. (Appendix C).

The problem can be attacked head-on by the establishment of a research and instructional service center under the auspices of a nearby university that would serve all junior colleges in the area.

The primary objective of the center would be to conduct action research in instructional areas, such as the remedial English program, in order to bring about immediate instructional improvement in the classrooms throughout the junior college district. Working with the large remedial student population, the center would:

(1) Develop and standardize diagnostic tests.
(2) Develop self-instructional materials.
(3) Train and supervise a cadre of teachers or tutors to implement research findings in action programs.
(4) Develop evaluative measures for assessing student progress.
(5) Disseminate information regarding findings, materials, evaluation of programs, etc.

In short, the primary objective would be to apply knowledge gained by research to an ongoing action program which initially would be conducted at the center and then implemented in classrooms throughout the junior college system or district.

The conclusions and recommendations pointed out here should make us realize that we face a desperate situation, a situation compounded by people in authority who disregard educational reality and

consistently refuse to do what is clearly possible. There is definitely a failure to connect reality with the paper organization of the system and, as a result, the junior college remedial English programs so far have shown more promise than performance. But our time, fraught with disorder, will no longer permit this, for our civilization is a race between education and catastrophe. We can no longer afford, then, to ignore so many students in need of remedial help, in need of reason, in need of learning to think and write clearly. We can no longer afford to ignore the possibility that so much student unrest and violence is due to the fact that the majority of students have not been taught to explain, argue, and express themselves rationally and precisely in English. We can no longer afford to ignore the fact that today so many campuses are becoming centers of unreason.

Educators have a responsibility to do something about this, and they might begin by giving serious consideration to the writing problems of remedial English students which reflect the illogical thinking of so many students who are coming to dominate the open-door junior college. But lest I be accused of sounding as if I had set forth all the answers herein, I caution the reader to remember the old Spanish saying: "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed is king." Let this study, therefore, be considered merely an attempt to awaken the need for additional research in the area of remedial English so that we may hasten the process of reform which is so desperately needed today.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND LIST OF FACULTY PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Community Colleges	Faculty of English Departments
Bronx Community College	Dr. Cortland P. Auser, Chairman Mr. J. Roland Gosslyn Mr. James DeMetro Mr. Gerald Lebowitz Mr. Neill Grill
Manhattan Community College	Dr. Charlotte Croman, Chairman Mr. Abraham Kupersmith Mrs. Marilyn Rosen Mrs. Sheila Klass
New York City Community College	Mrs. Pearl Gasarch representing Dr. Mortimer Becker, Chairman Mr. Louis Spitalnick Mrs. Melissa Schiff Mrs. Susan Cole
Staten Island Community College	Dr. Arthur Minerof, Deputy Chairman Mr. Leslie Comens Mr. William Abbott Mr. Richard Currie Mr. Norman Kruger

APPENDIX B

COPIES OF MATERIALS & TESTS UTILIZED IN THE STUDY

Note: None of these materials or tests are to be reproduced without the consent of the investigator; and, in particular, the grammar and vocabulary tests are not to be reproduced without the written consent of Dr. Paul Diederich, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.

COMPOSITION SCALE: GRADING STANDARDS

	Ideas	Organization	Sentence structure	Wording	Punctuation Mechanics Spelling
Superior (A - B)	Thesis statement is significant and clearly stated, supported by concrete and substantial points clearly related to the thesis statement	Plan of the paper is easy to follow, developed with originality and consistent attention to unity, coherence, emphasis	Sentences are well constructed even in varied and complicated sentence patterns	Words are used with correctness and distinctiveness: precisely, economically, imaginatively.	Rules of standard English have been observed; clarity and effectiveness of expression are enhanced accordingly
Average (C)	Thesis statement is apparent but insignificant or general, supported by points which are not fully explained and which are occasionally repetitious and irrelevent	Plan of paper is apparent but not consistently fulfilled. Somewhat inconsistent in attention to unity, coherence, emphasis	Sentences are usually correct in more familiar patterns but lack distinction	Words are generally appropriate but lack imagination and economy	Rules of standard English are violated occasionally which tend to weaken clarity and effectiveness of expression
Unacceptable (D - F)	Thesis statement is lacking or confused and points, if any, not explained or are repeated or irrelevent	Plan of paper is not apparent and is undeveloped. No attention is paid to unity, coherence, emphasis	Sentences reflect major errors, such as fused and incomplete and tend to be monotonous or childish	Words are used carelessly or inexactly and reflect substandard and childish quality	Basic rules of standard English are violated to a degree that communication is obscured

EVALUATION SHEET

(to be attached to student's composition)

MAIN IDEAS

ORGANIZATION

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

WORDING

PUNCTUATION, MECHANICS, AND SPELLING

Checklist of Gross Errors

Please check the following common errors you would label as gross errors, that is, errors that would label college themes as failing regardless of the level of their content.

____ 1. The run-on-sentence

____ 2. The sentence fragment

____ 3. Incorrect principal parts of the verb

____ 4. Confusion of adjectives and adverbs

____ 5. Lack of agreement of subject and verb

____ 6. Lack of agreement of pronoun and its antecedent

____ 7. Incorrect case of pronouns

____ 8. Misuse of the subjunctive

____ 9. Vague or indefinite pronominal reference

____ 10. Dangling elements

____ 11. Misplaced modifiers

____ 12. Errors in the comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs

____ 13. Double negatives

____ 14. Lack of parallelism

____ 15. Misspelling of common words

____ 16. Others - Please specify in space below

Before you start to work, tear off the answer sheet at the end of the test.

GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, AND MECHANICS TEST

Directions: Read each three-line question and decide whether there is an error in grammar, punctuation, or mechanics of any of the three lines. If so, note the number printed beside the line that contains the error. Then fill in the space below that number on your answer sheet. If there is no error in any line of the question, fill in the space below 0 on your answer sheet. No question has more than one line with an error, and some questions may not have any error. See the examples below.

EXAMPLES

A. 1. I have never saw
2. kangaroos, but I know
3. what they look like.

Line 1 of the question contains the verb form error "saw". Therefore, the space below 1 has been filled in for question A:

A. 0 1 2 3

B. 1. She promised to return the
2. book within three weeks.
3. Has she kept her promise?

The question contains no error. Therefore, the space below 0 has been filled in for question B:

B. 0 1 2 3

Please use a pencil.

1. 1 When the test was cancelled, everyone
2 was elated, especially those of us
3 who had not adequately studied for it.

2. 1 My horror increased
2 instantly. Clutching
3 my heart with icy fingers.

3. 1 "Visit me tomorrow,"
2 she said to him; "I'd
3 like to talk to you.

4. 1 Stanley went down to the
2 water and adjusted his
3 equipment, then he dived.

5. 1 If you want to get a good
2 seat, you should arrive
3 at the theater prompt.

6. 1 On you, my dear,
2 that dress looks
3 very well indeed.

7. 1 The man in the gray flannel
2 suit is the one who I think
3 is in charge of the project.

8. 1 He is the boy
2 who I understand
3 you called yesterday

9. 1 She came to the
2 costume party
3 dressed like me

10. 1 This may not be
2 The wisest plan
3 for you and I.

11. 1 His mother was very irritated
2 about Mitchell's spilling milk
3 all over the living room sofa.

12. 1 Ever willing to join a new club,
2 Ann founded a Spanish society,
3 and her's is a very busy life.

13. 1 In the adult group, there
2 were a doctor, an English
3 teacher, and a journalist.

14. 1 The finality of her remarks dictate
2 acceptance of the entire program, but
3 there are many dissatisfied members.

15. 1 The taste and simplicity is
2 refreshing in every costume
3 that he designs for women

16. 1 The word <u>mice</u> are a
2 plural noun, which must
3 take a plural verb.

17. 1 Silas had recently lost his money and was
2 very unhappy, but when he saw Eppie, he
3 forgot all his losses and began to smile.

18. 1 He grew angry when
2 he seen that his
3 rival had beaten him.

19. 1 I was taught that the
2 Mississippi river flows
3 into the Gulf of Mexico.

20. 1 Who was it
2 who wrote
3 <u>Time of Day</u>?

21. 1 The question that was hotly debated
2 and then voted upon by the members
3 was, where will the new pool be?

22. 1 The Mona Lisa has provoked a great
2 amount of discussion; no one can
3 explain the lady's inscrutable smile.

23. 1 Proper grammar is
2 a sine qua non for
3 writing good themes.

24. 1 George is one of
2 the best students
3 in the math. class.

25. 1 Rev. Jones gave the
2 invocation at the
3 graduation ceremony.

26. 1 Old legends still abound along the coast
2 of Maine and stories of the early settlers
3 pass from one generation to another.

27. 1 I shall buy some peas carrots
2 and celery at the market today.
3 What do you plan to buy, Susy?

28. 1 In his youth he was
2 a tall handsome man;
3 now he looks crabbed.

29. 1 Ah Henry I love
2 your hair parted
3 in the middle.

30. 1 Many people who are patriotically
2 minded, refused to follow the
3 rabble rouser's violent example.

31. 1 In order to do the
2 job, he needs, nails
3 tacks, and a hammer.

32. 1 The entertainment committee had planned a movie, a dance, and
2 an amateur show; but because the response of the local
3 entertainers was so small, the talent show had to be dropped.

33. 1 Mr. Bell was very nervous he
2 was afraid that the audience
3 would think he was unprepared

34. 1 I have trouble remembering
2 the two r's and two s's
3 in the word <u>embarrassment</u>.

35. 1 I cannot understand the
2 reasoning youre using
3 on this history problem.

36. 1 He said, "I refuse to go"; but his
2 mother, ignoring his pleas, dragged
3 him along with her to the car.

37. 1 Hurry or you'll be late, Carl's
2 mother cried. Carl grinned and
3 pulled the blanket over his head.

38. 1 Good heavens how
2 quickly the time
3 has passed today!

39. 1 Whenever Paul hears music,
2 (it doesn't matter what
3 kind), he feels like singing.

40. 1 He complained that the
2 new community had very
3 few well-built homes.

41. 1 The president elect will
2 take office at the end
3 of the current fiscal year.

42. 1 George he will not be
2 able to play baseball
3 with us on Saturday.

43. 1 In my opinion, I think
2 Mrs. Hammerfield is the
3 best teacher I ever had.

44. 1 James is so feeble
2 that he can hardly
3 lift his head up.

45. 1 Since it is the end
2 of the month, he
3 has hardly no money.

46. 1 Abraham Lincoln, believing that
2 national unity was more important,
3 finally consented to the Civil War.

47. 1 The florist explained that white
2 orchids are very delicate flowers,
3 and which are difficult to grow.

48. 1 The student who makes
2 the fewest errors will
3 win the prize -- a pen.

49. 1 Although all the other guests were dressed
2 rather informally in sweaters and slacks, Al
3 wore a tuxedo to the party that he rented.

50. 1 The patron who had
2 complained angrily
3 threatened to sue me.

51. 1 The book reviewer in the literary
2 magazine stated that the book was
3 not only dull but also old-fashioned.

52. 1 After hunting unsuccessfully for him for an hour,
2 I wasn't sure whether to return or if I should
3 continue searching for him in the forest.

53. 1 When we finally reached
2 the top of the mountain,
3 a beautiful view was seen.

54. 1 Each of you should remember to bring your history
2 book to school tomorrow. You will need them in
3 order to take the test that I have prepared for you.

55. 1 Although the weather of Chicago is not
2 always very pleasant, Chicago has always
3 been a favorite city for conventions.

56. 1 Last week, Cyrus and
2 Bud went fishing and
3 brought back ten of them.

57. 1 The arguments astonished the history and
2 English teachers. Miss Dee, specialist in
3 English politics, and Mr. Dotz, a Keats scholar.

58. 1 "I'd rather walk," said Bob, "It is
2 a bright, beautiful day, and I feel
3 the need for some form of exercise."

59. 1 Neither food nor drink are
2 of interest to him now; what
3 he cares most about is money.

60. 1 As soon as I have made up my
2 mind on an issue, I often wish
3 I had chosen another solution.

61. 1 As soon as we reached New
2 York we went to the theater
3 to buy tickets for the matinee.

62. 1 Mr. Cell asked whether
2 the committee had
3 reached a decision?

63. 1 Tom Waterman always eats his
dinner very slowly but
2 gulps down his dessert quickly.
At dinner last night,
3 he ate the pudding his mother
made in less than a minute.

64. 1 I have heard that in parts of
Spain
2 one can attend bullfights.
Can they
3 also attend bullfights in
Portugal?

65. 1 He asked him if he would
2 be permitted to go on the
3 long hike on Saturday.

S P E L L I N G

Directions: On the answer sheet fill in the space below 1 if the spelling is correct, or fill in the space below 2 if the spelling is incorrect.

Examples:

		1	2
a.	acceptable	■	□
b.	amature	□	■

- - - -

VOCABULARY

Directions: Fill in the space on your answer sheet below the number which corresponds to the word or phrase that is closest in meaning to each word.

Example:

prevail: 1. to triumph 2. prevent 3. hold

1. ■■■■ 2. ☐ 3. ☐

1. abase: 1- set up firmly, 2- degrade, 3- slanting

2. acquiesce: 1- remain silent, 2- agree to, 3- argue

3. animate: 1- weaken, 2- arouse, 3- imply

4. antipathy: 1- deep feeling for, 2- deep feeling against, 3- absence of feeling

5. arduous: 1- difficult, 2- loving, 3- fearful

6. assay: 1- attempt, 2- analysis, 3- aside

7. avarice: 1- greediness, 2- complexity, 3- alertness

8. beneficence: 1- well-being, 2- charity, 3- wealth

9. caprice: 1- whim, 2- dance, 3- seizure

10. cataclysm: 1- upheaval, 2- severing, 3- chemical reaction

11. commodious: 1- roomy 2- pleasant, 3-helpful

12. configuration: 1- arrangement, 2- recheck of figures, 3- likeness

13. congenital: 1-dating from birth, 2- agreeable, 3- deformed

14. consign: 1-commit to, 2-share responsibility with, 3- symbol

15. correlate: 1- give report together, 2- find similarity of variation, 3- tell exactly

16. corroborate: 1- confirm, 2- establish relationship, 3- steal

17. cursory: 1- writing with rounded strokes, 2- hasty, 3- race track

18. deprecate: 1- give consent to, 2- express disapproval of, 3-curse

19. disconsolate: 1- impolite, 2- not to be soothed, 3- upset by bad advice

20. discursive: 1- forgetful, 2- pleasing, 3- not keeping to point

21. dissipate: 1- scatter, 2- not fertile, 3- concentrate

22. dogmatic: 1- mistaken, 2- careful and accurate, 3- opinionated

23. emanate: 1- about to happen, 2- come forth from, 3- tower over

24. eschew: 1- digest, 2- keep oneself from, 3- bring into court

25. expunge: 1- explain, 2- learn, 3- erase

26. extol: 1- be superior to, 2- praise highly, 3- take from by force

27. extraneous: 1- not truly a part of, 2- not sociable, 3- hard to get on with

28. extricate: 1- explain, 2- free from difficulties, 3- put an end to

29. fortuitous: 1- happening by chance, 2- strong, 3- unwanted

30. frugal: 1- honest, 2- willing to share, 3- saving

31. hyperbole: 1- large tree trunk, 2- kind of curve, 3- over-statement

32. importune: 1- unfortunate, 2- press with requests, 3- not significant

33. interminable: 1- unbearable, 2- mixed up, 3- endless

34. iterate: 1- speak, 2- say again and again, 3- travel about

35. lampoon: 1- satire, 2- kind of light, 3- regret

36. odious: 1- hateful, 2- scent, 3- queer

37. paradox: 1- seemingly self-contradictory statement, 2- right belief in religion 3- trick

38. pecuniary: 1- of money, 2- oddity, 3- frequently

39. pervade: 1- spread through, 2- avoid, 3- examine

40. perverse: 1- persist, 2- unreasonable, 3- detect

41. pretension: 1- something which sticks out, 2- highly nervous condition, 3- unwarranted claim

42. proletarian: 1- of the lowest class, 2- elementary, 3- of the middle class

43. propitious: 1- good at a job, 2- favorable, 3- near

44. rancor: 1- bad tasting, 2- loud noise, 3- bitter feeling

45. rectitude: 1- righteousness, 2- preaching, 3- ambition

46. relevant: 1- vigorous, 2- applicable, 3- important

47. resuscitate: 1- take care of, 2- cut off from society, 3- revive

48. retribution: 1- offering, 2- punishment, 3- order

49. schism: 1- union, 2- division, 3- decrease

50. scintillation: 1- indecency, 2- sparkle, 3- explosion

51. sordid: 1- low, self-interested, 2- angry, 3- in deep mourning

52. stoicism: 1- lack of reason, 2- lack of religion, 3- indifference to emotions

53. subjugate: 1- think over carefully, 2- give form of verb, 3- conquer

54. succulence: 1- distaste, 2- enjoyment, 3- juiciness

55. superfluous: 1- liquid in form, 2- on surface only, 3- more than necessary

56. terse: 1- grammatical term, 2- rigid, 3- short

57. tremulous: 1- quivering, 2- uproar, 3- large

58. ulterior: 1- purposeless, 2- beyond what is obvious, 3- farthest extreme

59. venerate: 1- old, 2- have deep respect for, 3- cause to do wrong

60. volatile: 1- willing, 2- evaporating rapidly, 3- able to change occupation quickly

APPENDIX C

REMEDIAL ENGLISH IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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